

# Regarding Lentils (‘Adas)

(Average reading time: 5 minutes)

## Introduction

Like many of us growing up, I absolutely despised lentils. The texture, smell, color, and taste—everything about them felt repulsive to me. Unfortunately, our parents did not share our dislike for lentils and insisted we eat them—sometimes even tying it to whether we could play outside. Ah, the good old days.

As I got older, I learned about the nutritional benefits of lentils. Still, I cannot say I enjoy eating them. Nevertheless, in the spirit of fairness, I decided to put together this brief guide to share some of lentils’ pros and cons.

-----

## Fabricated Narratives and False Aḥādīth Regarding Lentils

Sometimes, what appears ancient and holy may merely be folklore dressed in religious garment. Those lofty sayings claiming lentils (‘adas) soften the heart with a spiritual touch and are food for the righteous (ṣāliḥīn)? Fabrications, all of them. None of these alleged Prophetic narrations (Aḥādīth) are authentic. Not a shred of authentic *Sunnah* backs them. ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 797 CE), a prominent Islamic scholar, denied the claim that the tongues of seventy *Anbiyā’* (Prophets) praised lentils. The science of Prophetic narrations (‘ilm al-Ḥadīth) exists for a reason—to sift the truth from fiction, ensuring only the verified sayings of the Prophet ﷺ <sup>1</sup> are preserved. The fabrications surrounding lentils are a powerful reminder of the importance of Islamic scholarship. False reports can lead to confusion and misguided practices, which is why scholars like Ibn al-Mubārak, were quick to dismiss false attributions.

Actually, the most accurate statement regarding lentils is that they were the food desired by the Jews (*Yahūd*). Lentils (‘Adas) are mentioned alongside garlic (*thūm*), cucumbers (*qiththā’*) and onions (*baṣal*) in historical contexts.

The *Qur'ān* itself mentions<sup>2</sup> that the Children of Israel (*Banū Isrā'īl*) longed for lentils over the manna and quails bestowed upon them.

Furthermore, Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) served roasted calf (*'ijl ḥanīdh*) to his guests, not lentils, as some might mistakenly believe. The *Qur'ān* is clear on this<sup>3</sup>, yet the myth persists. Do not buy into every religious narrative—verify, confirm, and stick to authentic sources.

## Lentils: Double-Edged Sword

Here is where things get really interesting. Lentils carry dual powers. They can both tighten and loosen the body's constitution. That sounds paradoxical, but the lentil's shell (*qishr*), is an antidote (*tiryāq*), but its kernel (*lubb*)? Slow to digest, potentially problematic for digestion, which is why whole lentils are healthier than the powdered form, easier on the stomach, and less harmful.

In traditional medicine, lentils are like double-edged swords. They can heal or harm, depending on the body's needs and temperament. This dual nature encourages us to think more deeply about the foods we consume: not every healthy-looking food is beneficial in all contexts.

Too much of anything can be dangerous, and lentils are no exception. Overeat them, and you are looking at a laundry list of potential ailments. The problem lies with the combination of lentils and sweet foods that could clog your liver, cause difficulty in urination, cause bloating and darken your eyesight. **The worst thing you can mix lentils with is capers.** Lentils are also linked to black bile production (*sawdā'*), which in turn can cause melancholia (*mālīkhūlyā*), nervous disorders, and even vision impairment. The concept of humoral imbalance (in this case, excess black bile) reflects a traditional medical understanding wherein balance among the bodily humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) was essential to health. Worse still, overindulging can thicken the blood, leading to delusions (*waswās*), fever (*ḥummá*), and even leprosy (*judhām*). Solution? Balance it out. Add spinach, beets, or ghee to mitigate these effects.

The lesson? Moderation is not just about portion size; it is about harmonizing our inner bodily systems.

Not all lentils are created equal. The white, plump ones that cook quickly? They are the best choice—easier to digest, gentler on the body, and less likely to cause those nasty effects mentioned earlier. In India, rice and lentils are fermented for at least two days before they are prepared as *idli* and *dosas*.

## The Nutritional Power of Lentils

That said, lentils are a nutritional powerhouse that can offer a variety of health benefits when incorporated into a balanced diet. However, traditional medical wisdom, including *Ṭibb an-Nabawī* (Prophetic Medicine), stresses the importance of moderation due to their potential to cause harm when consumed in excess.

Lentils are much more than a simple legume. Packed with complex carbohydrates, fiber, protein, and minerals, lentils fuel the body efficiently, offering sustained energy and essential nutrients. Their low glycemic index helps regulate blood sugar, making them an excellent choice for individuals with diabetes or those looking to manage their weight.

When consumed, lentils release energy slowly, preventing sudden spikes and crashes in blood glucose levels. Their combination of high fiber and protein makes them satiating, keeping hunger at bay and reducing overeating. Lentils are also rich in iron, a nutrient essential for producing hemoglobin and maintaining energy levels. Think of lentils as a “slow-burn” fuel for your body, like a long-lasting battery that keeps you going without the need for constant recharging. They also seem to be beneficial for the heart.

*Wa Billāhi Tawfīq* (And with Allāh lies success.)

*Jaouad Yakhlef*

Tangier, Morocco

Sunday 5 *Rabī al-Awwal*<sup>4</sup> 1446H<sup>5</sup> — 8 September 2024

## References:

*Ṭibb an-Nabawī* (Part of *Zād al-Ma‘ād* by Ibn al-Qayyim) | **Page:** 260-261 |  
**Publisher:** Dār al-Hilāl - Beirut

Fallon, S., & Enig, M. G. (2000, January 1). *Be kind to your grains, and your grains will be kind to you.*

Rafīq, A. A. (2008, December 31). *Ibn al-Qayyim: Lentils eaten whole are more beneficial.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Within Islamic etiquette, it is customary to include a specific supplication after mentioning the Prophet Moḥammad. It is often written in the following manner: {صلى الله عليه وسلم} {Ṣallā 'llāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam} This means, contextually: “May Allāh’s peace and blessings be upon him.”

<sup>2</sup> *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:61

<sup>3</sup> *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:69

<sup>4</sup> *Rabī' al-Awwal* is the third month in the Islamic lunar calendar.

<sup>5</sup> The “H” (in Arabic: هـ) is an abbreviation for هجرة (Hijrah/Emigration). It refers to the year in which the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Medina (tr. *al-Madīnah an-Nabawīyah*). As Muslims, we adhere to our own calendar whenever possible, known in Arabic as التقويم الهجري (transliterated as *at-Taqwīm al-Hijrī*).